

## ***FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET***

**Meeting Date:** April 10, 2014

**Agenda Item:** Haymaker WMA Grazing Lease Renewal

**Division:** Wildlife Division

**Action Needed:** Final

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 10 minutes

---

### **Background**

The Haymaker Wildlife Management Area encompasses 1,360 acres, all managed by FWP. The affected area of the proposed action is south facing slopes and large grassy benches which provide winter range for elk. mule deer and white-tail deer currently use the WMA throughout the year. Beginning in 1984, a grazing system was established on the WMA to promote attractive spring and summer green-up vegetation conditions for elk; thereby reducing elk usage of adjacent private property. The proposal is directed at continuing the grazing system through a four-year grazing lease with the Miller Ranch, thus helping to reduce elk usage of adjacent private property during the winter and spring. Year-round and seasonal forage for elk, mule deer and other big game would be maintained.

### **Public Involvement Process & Results**

The proposed lease renewal Environmental Assessment was available for public comment from Feb. 18 – March 14. Solicitation of public input resulted in receipt of three email comments (two positive, one neutral/negative). Responses came from one organized group (Gallatin Wildlife Association) with the remainder from private sportspeople. A decision notice based on public input will be available before the Commission meeting.

### **Alternatives and Analysis:**

Under the "no action" alternative, no livestock grazing would occur, residual vegetation would build up over time, and the area would become less attractive to elk, mule deer and other game and nongame wildlife species. Under those conditions, large numbers of elk are more likely use forage on adjacent private land, especially during the winter and spring. Under the proposed action, however, the spring and summer green-up conditions for elk would remain attractive; thereby reducing elk usage of adjacent private property. Renewal of the grazing lease would also maintain positive relationships with local landowners.

### **Agency Recommendation & Rationale**

FWP recommends renewing a four-year grazing lease on the Haymaker WMA. Continuation of the proposed grazing plan would use cattle grazing as a management tool to maintain quality forage on the WMA to decrease elk use of adjacent private lands. The lessee would benefit from the availability of early spring pasture for their cattle.

### **Proposed Motion**

I move the Commission approve the four-year Haymaker WMA grazing lease as described.